



Photo by MELBOURNE SPURR

Theda Bara in the hey-day of her fame. Her inspired press agent gave it out that Theda was born in the shadow of the pyramids. She really was born in Cincinnati.

Is Theda Bara *Alive* or *Dead*?

An impostor fills the place of the famous vampire, while Theda Bara sleeps peacefully in her grave, is the rumor. Is there any truth in this old wives' tale?

By EUNICE MARSHALL

IS THEDA BARA preparing to resume her career in pictures where she laid it down in 1920?

Or is she sleeping in a quiet grave in a Cincinnati cemetery, while a sister, strangely resembling her, perpetuates the famous name?

Such is the strange question that is being whispered in the inner circles of filmdom. Could such a thing be?

Yes, say the whisperers. Nonsense, say the incredulous.

What the Gossips Say

THEDA BARA, the most famous vampire of film history, is a name to be conjured with. Her portrayals of "the woman who did not care" brought her fame and wealth and love. She was at the peak of her career.

Then came the influenza, the dread plague that ravaged the land like its fore-runner of history, the Black Death. And Theda Bara—so the whisperers state, fell a victim.

But the name was too valuable to be lost, according to the eery tale the whisperers tell. And so the death was hushed up, the funeral quietly held, and a half-sister who might have been Theda herself, so strongly did she resemble her, "carried on" in Theda's place. That was in 1918. Such is the story.

Could It Have Happened?

A ROMANTIC story, but is it true? Could it possibly have happened?

One gets to know an actress very well indeed upon a studio lot. Her characteristics, her mannerisms, her very soul is bared in the emotional crisis of a scene. Could an impostor deceive a hundred spectators daily? Not without the aid of the studio itself. Is it possible—or probable,—that the Fox studio, realizing the value of her name and

mourning that her contract had two years to run, conspired to deceive the public?

Reason says no. Yet—one recalls that part of Theda Bara's publicity demanded that she go veiled like a Turkish woman, that she be a mystery forever unsolved. Was there a reason for this secrecy, other than giving her the mystic atmosphere that her type required?

Perhaps it is only a coincidence, but we are reminded of a story that was published in a well-known magazine in 1918. According to this story a famous portrayeur of "vampire" types died, right in the midst of filming a picture. The producers had hundreds of thousands of dollars tied up in the uncompleted film. So a double was procured to finish the picture.

As the "rushes" of the double were run off in the dim projecting room of the studio, a figure or a mere wraith of a figure appeared upon the screen. It was the figure

of the dead vampire. Double exposure, the producer and director said at first. But they both knew that they had taken no double exposures. And a cold chill ran down their spines as the dead actress' dog, watching with them in the projecting room, lifted up his head and howled.

Evidence For the Defense

VIGOROUS denial of Theda Bara's death led Screenland to take steps to investigate the truth of the rumor. A life-long acquaintance of Theda Bara's was questioned as to the possible veracity of the rumor. He scoffed at it.

"I have not seen Theda for two years," he said. "The last time was when she was playing on the legitimate stage in *The Blue Flame*. But the actress whom I saw then was the Theda Bara I knew when she was a young girl."

A man high in motion picture circles has just come to Hollywood from the east. The day before he left New York he saw Miss Bara. It was *the* Theda Bara, no impostor.

A publicity man who knows Hollywood like the back of his hand is personally acquainted with both Theda Bara and her family. Miss Bara, whose original name before her marriage to Charles Brabin, was Esther Goodman, has one half-sister. So far the rumor is substantiated. But this publicity man who never lies out of office hours, asserts that both Miss Bara and the half-sister are still most actively alive, and that the half-sister no more resembles Miss Bara than he, the publicity man, does.

Furthermore, Mr. E. Walter Evans, Registrar of Vital Statistics of the Board of Health of Cincinnati, Miss Bara's home, informs us that there is absolutely no record

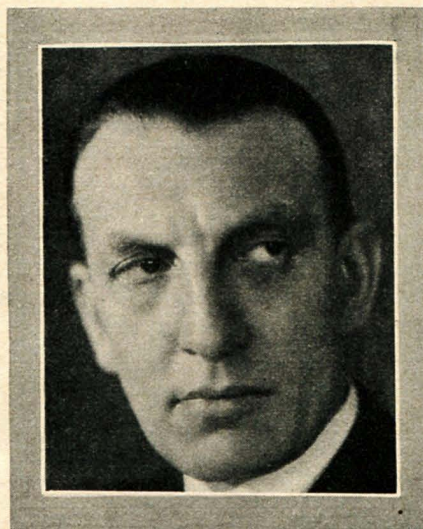


Photo by CLARENCE S. BULL

Charles Brabin, the husband of Theda Bara, and the director who has given to a grateful country one of the finest pictures of the year, "Driven."



FOX PHOTO

Can it be that we used to think Theda Bara more wicked than she was? This "still" from an old photograph leads us to think so.



INTERNATIONAL PHOTO

A recent photograph of Theda Bara, snapped on board the S. S. Adriatic en route for Europe, a few months ago. Compare this with the other photographs. Is she the same Theda?

of the death of Esther Goodman or a Mrs. Charles Brabin in their registry.

Theda is Coming Back

THE whisperers, who assert that Theda Bara was but is not, will soon have an opportunity to recant. For the famous vampire is coming soon to Hollywood to join her husband, Charles Brabin, the distinguished director who has given a grateful country one of the finest pictures of this or any other year, *Driven*. And Brabin merely smiles tolerantly at the rumor questioning his wife's identity. The idea is too absurd for him to get angry about.

"I directed Theda Bara in several of her last pictures for Fox," Mr. Brabin said, "*La Belle Russe* and *Kathleen Mavourneen*."

It was while he was her director that he fell in love with Theda. And she fell in love, too, with his bigness and his sincerity and kindness. The romance culminated in a romantic marriage at John McCormick's lovely summer home on Long Island. Unknown to any but the famous singer and themselves, they took the bridal vows under a great tree in a shady little lane called Lane's End, on the McCormick estate.

The next day, Brabin took his bride to his estate in Nova Scotia. Here, many miles from a railway, the newly married pair found the 1500-acre estate a perfect Eden. There were no servants, and Brabin announced that unless Theda fed him he was doomed to starve. Theda had had a very indulgent

mother, and like many American girls, her culinary accomplishments were limited to fudge. But she was game, and every day the world's most potent vampire donned a gingham apron and cooked for her spouse. She prepared him lobster for breakfast and other indigestible dishes and they laughed a great deal and were very happy. And on the seventh day, as they walked in the gardens, they heard a clicking of cameras and Mr. Brabin sighed and said, "They are here." The world had found them out and the honeymoon was over.

The Brabins were ideally happy for almost a year. Then they had one disagreement. Telegrams flew back and forth between New York where Theda was staying, and

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Religion in Hollywood

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the recent reviewing, by the pastor in his pulpit, of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*. Fearing we might learn something at church not good for our youthful minds, we did not attend.

The Ambassador Theatre doubles on Sundays as a church de luxe, patronized by wealthy tourists and famous screen stars. Here many of our stars have spoken. Milton Sills once gave a most creditable sermon which made penitents of many bad little boys and foolish little girls. Helen Ferguson stood behind the pulpit one Sunday, her first public speech, and frankly discussed the motion picture industry with the sincerity that won her many dis-creeit plaudits.

The Miracle Woman

TRUE, we have one brimstone-orator left, a sort of Miracle Lady, running second however to Peter: Rev. Aimee Semple McPherson, who holds regular "Divine healing services." Despite the fact that the tabernacle holds 5300 people, over 1000 are turned away at every serv-

ice. Of the old-time shouting Billy Sunday type, this enterprising woman evangelist and press agent draws to full houses and undoubtedly, beneath the publicity which haloes her efforts, does a commendable work.

The only church in Los Angeles that welcomes all creeds and takes up no collection is the Beth-El-Mission, presided over by a lovable old gentleman of eighty-two who, with his brother and the latter's wife, furnish the music also. But, alas, it is situated in a far corner of the city and is patronized mostly by the poorer and middle-class families.

The Movies' Church

THE "movie folks church," has for its rector Rev. Neal Dodd, friend and spiritual adviser of all the picture-people.

All in all, you may take your choice of religion here. All creeds, sects, personalities—and advertisements—are to be found in our churches. Right now, it is the novel that draws the crowds, that appeals to our stars' ennuied souls.

Is Theda Bara Dead?

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Hollywood where Brabin was directing for Goldwyn. Rumors began to be bruited about. Was the Brabin marriage to go the way of so many other Hollywood marriages?

But no. The bone of contention was simply this. Theda wanted to go back on the screen. Two years of idleness, even though she was most happily married, began to pall upon her. She had had a generous taste of the fascination that lies in electric lights. But her English husband did not agree with her ambitions.

Doesn't Want Theda to Work

IF BRABIN has his way about it, Theda Bara will cease to be Theda Bara and be just Mrs. Charles Brabin. Being a man and an Englishman, he loves domesticity and wants very much to have his beautiful wife installed just as mistress in his home.

"I hope she will not go back to

the screen," he says. "I am living at a hotel now and I am so deucedly lonely. I daren't speak to a young woman, for fear of the gossips, and I have to devote my time to the dowagers. I am so very anxious for her to come to Hollywood, to make a real home for both of us.

"Yet I know that I am asking a big thing when I say to a woman who has done big things, Stay home and darn my socks.' It's compromising my wife, I know."

And so Charles Brabin, generously seeing his talented wife's side of it, is conceding something and Theda, too, is conceding something. Perhaps Theda will do as her nice, big husband wishes.

But Hollywood, while sympathizing with his desires, is looking forward to the return of the prodigal, the most deliciously wicked woman on the screen. Hollywood wants to see for itself if Theda Bara is the Theda Bara it used to know.

"Make Your Marriage A Success"



Marriage always means misery to the unfit. Ask yourself before you propose to some pure, innocent girl, whether you are fit to be her husband and the father of her children—and whether your offspring will be healthy youngsters—a joy and blessing to you both or sickly, defective little ones; a constant reproach to you as long as you live. What you are your children are bound to be and your weaknesses will be increased as you pass them along to your children, who may live to curse you for their inheritance of woe. This is the inflexible law of Heredity. You cannot avoid it. You dare not overlook it. THINK now before it is too late and resolve to

Fit Yourself For Matrimony

You are not fit if you are weak, sickly and under-developed. You dare not marry and ruin some trusting girl's life if Youthful Errors, Bad Habits, or Excesses have sapped your vitality and left you a mere apology for a real man. Don't think you can save yourself with dope and drugs. Such unnatural materials can never remove the cause of your weaknesses and will surely harm you. The only way you can be restored is through Nature's

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The Perfect Man

basic Laws. She will never fail you if you will sit at her feet and learn her ways.

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